Neo-Freudians

Dissention in the Ranks

While Sigmund Freud is considered the father of psychoanalysis, and by many, the father of modern personality theory, he was also very strict and stubborn about his beliefs. As a respected scholar, he developed a following of well known theorists and psychologists in his psychoanalytic society. But as theories were discussed, questioned, and revamped, many found themselves at odds with the father in their views for the society and the theories.

As these members began to break from the Freudian camp, many new theories emerged that have become well received in their own right. These new theories, however, hold many of the same underlying beliefs of psychoanalysis, most importantly the view of the unconscious as an important drive in human emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. The idea of defense mechanisms related to the unconscious have also been maintained in many of these new theories as well as the importance of early development of the formation of the personality.

As such, these new theories, arising from psychoanalytic thought and the writings of Freud, still maintain many Freudian components. The term Neo-Freudian or Psychodynamic have both been used to describe those who left the psychoanalytic society and formed their own schools of thought.

Neo-Freudian Disagreements with Freud

There are a few different reasons why these neo-Freudian thinkers disagreed with Freud. For example, Erik Erikson believed that Freud was incorrect to believe that personality is shaped almost entirely by childhood events. Other issues that motivated neo-Freudian thinkers include (1) Freud's emphasis on sexual urges as a primary motivator; (2) Freud's negative view of human nature (3) Freud's belief that personality is entirely shaped by early childhood experiences; (4) Freud's lack of emphasis on social and cultural influences on behavior and personality.

Alfred Adler

The First to Leave

Alfred Adler joined Freud's analytic society in 1902 and was even named the first president in 1910. However, after growing disagreements he left with several other theorists in 1911, starting his own group originally named the 'Society for Free Psychoanalytic Research.' It is suspected that this name was meant as an attack on Freud's stubbornness to accepting disagreements and challenge to his theories. The name was later changed to 'Individual Psychology,' perhaps as a means to differentiate Adler as an independent theorist in his search for overcoming his perceived inferiority.

Inferiority

According to Adler's theory, each of us is born into the world with a sense of inferiority. We start as a weak and helpless child and strive to overcome these deficiencies by become superior to those around us. He called this struggle a *striving for superiority*, and like Freud's Eros and Thanatos, he saw this as the driving force behind all human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

For those of us who strive to be accomplished writers, powerful business people, or influential politicians, it is because of our feelings of inferiority and a strong need to over come this negative part of us according to Adler. This excessive feeling of inferiority can also have the opposite effect. As it becomes overwhelming and without the needed successes, we can develop an inferiority complex. This belief leaves us with feeling incredibly less important and deserving than others, helpless, hopeless, and unmotivated to strive for the superiority that would make us complete.

Parenting and Birth Order

<u>Parenting Styles.</u> Adler did agree with Freud on some major issues relating to the parenting of children and the long term effects of improper or inefficient child rearing. He identified two parental styles that he argued will cause almost certain problems in adulthood. The first was pampering, referring to a parent overprotecting a child, giving him too much attention, and sheltering him from the negative realities of life. As this child grows older, he will be ill equipped to deal with these realities, may doubt his own abilities or decision making skills, and may seek out others to replace the safety he once enjoyed as a child.

On the other extreme is what Adler called neglect. A neglected child is one who is not protected at all from the world and is forced to face life's struggles alone. This child may grow up to fear the world, have a strong sense of mistrust for others and she may have a difficult time forming intimate relationships.

The best approach, according to this theory, is to protect children form the evils of the world but not shelter them from it. In more practical terms, it means allowing them to hear or see the negative aspects of the world while still feeling the safety of parental influence. In other words, don't immediately go to the school principal if your child is getting bullied, but rather teach your child how to respond or take care of herself at school.

<u>Birth Order.</u> Simply put, Adler believed that the order in which you are born to a family inherently affects your personality. First born children who later have younger siblings may have it the worst. These children are given excessive attention and pampering by their parents until that fateful day when the little brother or sister arrives. Suddenly they are no longer the center of attention and fall into the shadows wondering why everything changed. According to Adler, they are left feeling inferior, questioning their importance in the family, and trying desperately to gain back the attention they suddenly lost. The birth order theory holds that first born children often have the greatest number of problems as they get older.

Middle born children may have it the easiest, and interestingly, Adler was a middle born child. These children are not pampered as their older sibling was, but are still afforded the attention. As a middle child, they have the luxury of trying to dethrone the oldest child and become more superior while at the same time knowing that they hold this same power over their younger siblings. Adler believed that middle children have a high need for superiority and are often able to seek it out such as through healthy competition.

The youngest children, like the first born, may be more likely to experience personality problems later in life. This is the child who grows up knowing that he has the least amount of power in the whole family. He sees his older siblings having more freedom and more superiority. He also gets pampered and protected more than any other child did. This could leave him with a sense that he cannot take on the world alone and will always be inferior to others.

Carl Jung

A Disappointing Break

Carl Jung's break from Freud's Psychoanalytic Society was perhaps the most disappointing for Freud. When they met it is reported that they spent over 12 hours discussing psychoanalytic theory, and soon after, Jung became the logical successor to the society. He resigned from the organization in 1914 after intense disagreements with his mentor.

The main disagreement he had with Freud was his belief that there was more to the unconscious than Freud theorized. Jung believed that there were fears, behaviors, and thoughts that children and adults exhibit that are remarkably similar across time and culture. He believed that this was more than coincidence and represented what he called the *collective unconscious*.
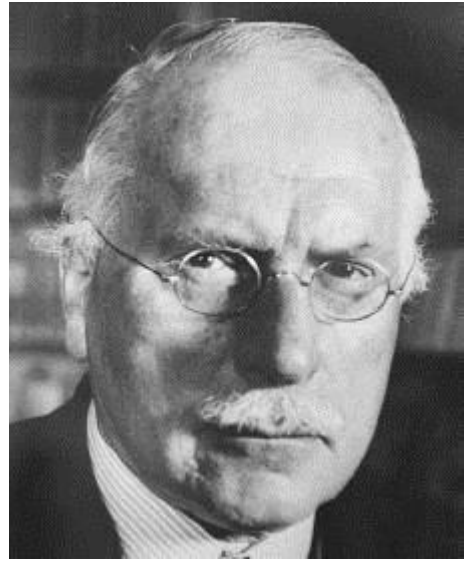
Mythology, Jung claimed, bases its stories on the archetypes. Mythology is the reservoir of deep, hidden, wondrous truths. Dreams and psychological crises, fevers and derangement, and chance encounters resonating with "meaningful coincidences" all gateways to the collective unconscious, which is ready to restore the individual psyche to health with its insights. Jung maintained that these metaphysical notions are scientifically grounded, yet they are not empirically testable in any meaningful way.

His newly formed school of thought, Analytic Psychology, theorized about how this collective unconscious influences personality. He argued that it was made up of what he termed *archetypes* which are *primordial images* inherited from our ancestors. As support for such a theory, he spoke of the immediate attachment infants have for their mother, the inevitable fear of the dark seen in young children, and how images such as the sun, moon, wise old man, angels, and evil all seem to be predominate themes throughout history.

In his view, infants are drawn to their mother because of the unconscious image of mother that is alive in all of us and that we fear the dark because of the unconscious image of darkness. Although he described many archetypes in his writings, there are a few that have received a lot of attention and thought. These include the animus/anima, the shadow, the persona, and the self.

The *animus* is the masculine side of the female and the *anima* is the feminine side of the male. This expands on Freud's writings that we are all born bisexual and develop normal sexual attraction through our psychosexual development. According to Jung, we all have an unconscious opposite gender hidden within us and the role of this archetype is to guide us toward the perfect mate. In other words, we project our animus/anima onto others as they project theirs onto us. When a match is made, we have found a suitable partner.

Another archetype is called the *shadow* which is basically the unconscious negative or dark side of our personality. The shadow, like all other archetypes, is passed down through history and given different names depending on time and culture. In Judeo-Christian writings, according to Jung, the shadow archetype is called the Devil.

The **persona** is how we present ourselves to the world. The word "persona" is derived from a Latin word that literally means "mask." It is not a literal mask, however. The persona represents all of the different social masks that we wear among different groups and situations. It acts to shield the ego from negative images. According to Jung, the persona may appear in dreams and take a number of different forms.

Finally, the **self** archetype is the unifying part of all of us that finds balance in our lives. Working with the ego (which is partly in our personal unconscious), it helps us manage the other archetypes and helps us feel complete.

Jung suggested that the number of existing archetypes is not static or fixed. Instead, many different archetypes may overlap or combine at any given time. The following are just a few of the various archetypes that Jung described:

- **The father:** Authority figure; stern; powerful.
- **The mother:** Nurturing; comforting.
- **The child:** Longing for innocence; rebirth; salvation.
- **The wise old man:** Guidance; knowledge; wisdom.
- **The hero:** Champion; defender; rescuer.
- **The maiden:** Innocence; desire; purity.
- **The trickster:** Deceiver; liar; trouble-maker.

While his writings are poetic at times and nearly impossible to follow at others, the remarkable way his theories blend with myths, folklore, and legends has kept his theories alive. Are his archetypes nothing more than naturally born instincts or are they an unconscious representation of our long dead ancestors? Many argue that Jung has pieced together an important, and previously missing, explanation of these personality aspects that we all share.

Karen Horney

Ahead of her Time - Feminine Psychology

Perhaps the most important contribution Karen Horney made to psychodynamic thought was her disagreements with Freud's view of women. Horney was never a student of Freud, but did study his work and eventually taught psychoanalysis at both the Berlin and New York Psychoanalytic Institute. After her insistence that Freud's view of the inherent difference between males and females, she agreed to leave the institute and form her own school known as the American Institute for Psychoanalysis.

In many ways, Horney was well ahead of her time and although she died before the feminist movement took hold, she was perhaps the theorist who changed the way psychology looked at gender differences. She countered Freud's concept of penis envy with what she called womb envy, or man's envy of woman's ability to bear children. **Womb envy** denotes the envy men feel towards a woman's primary role in nurturing and sustaining life. Horney proposed that men experience womb envy more powerfully than women experience penis envy, because "men need to disparage women more than women need to disparage men". She also argued that men compensate for this inability by striving for achievement and success in other realms, which explains the male propensity for fighting, and striving for success in athletics, business, etc. As a psychoanalyst, Horney considered womb envy a cultural, psychosocial tendency, like the concept of penis envy, rather than an innate male psychological trait

She also disagreed with Freud's belief that males and females were born with inherent differences in their personality. Rather than citing biological differences, she argued for a societal and cultural explanation. In her view, men and women were equal outside of the cultural restrictions often placed on being female. These views, while not well accepted at the time, were used years after her death to help promote gender equality.

Neurosis and Relationships

Horney was also known for her study of neurotic personality. She defined neurosis as a maladaptive and counterproductive way of dealing with relationships. These people are unhappy and desperately seek out relationships in order to feel good about themselves. Their way of securing these relationships include projections of their own insecurity and neediness which eventually drives others away.

Most of us have come in contact with people who seem to successfully irritate or frighten people away with their clinginess, significant lack of self esteem, and even anger and threatening behavior. According to Horney, these individuals adapted this personality style through a childhood filled with anxiety. And while this way of dealing with others may have been beneficial in their youth, as adults it serves to almost guarantee their needs will not be met.

She identified three ways of dealing with the world that are formed by an upbringing in a neurotic family: Moving Toward People, Moving Against People, and Moving Away From People.

Moving Toward People. Some children who feel a great deal of anxiety and helplessness move toward people in order to seek help and acceptance. They are striving to feel worthy and can believe the only way to gain this is through the acceptance of others. These people have an intense need to be liked, involved, important, and appreciated. So much so, that they will often fall in love quickly or feel an artificial but very strong attachment to people they may not know well. Their attempts to make that person love them creates a clinginess and neediness that much more often than not results in the other person leaving the relationship.

Moving Against People. Another way to deal with insecurities and anxiety is to try to force your power onto others in hopes of feeling good about yourself. Those with this personality style come across as bossy, demanding, selfish, and even cruel. Horney argued that these people project their own hostilities (which she called externalization) onto others and therefore use this as a justification to 'get them before they get me.' Once again, relationships appear doomed from the beginning.

Moving Away From People. The final possible consequence of a neurotic household is a personality style filled with asocial behavior and an almost indifference to others. If they don't get involved with others, they can't be hurt by them. While it protects them from emotional pain of relationships, it also keeps away all positive aspects of relationships. It leaves them feeling alone and empty.
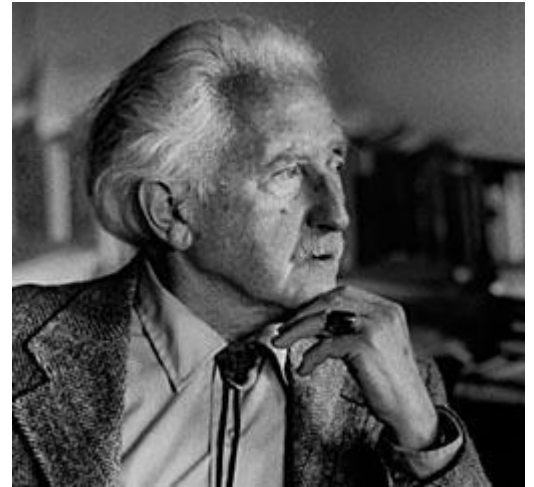
Erik Erikson

The New Ego

Erik Erikson wasn't trained by Sigmund Freud, nor did he hold a Doctorate a highly respected university. In fact, he was not formally educated like the vast majority of his psychodynamic colleagues. Although his parents pushed for medical school, Erikson saw himself as an artist and spent his youth wandering through Europe living the artist's life. In 1927, he took a job working with children of Freud's patients and friends. The school approached development psychoanalytically and Erikson was soon to master this theory and begin developing his own theories relating to personality development.

His two major contributions to psychodynamic thought include a reappraisal of the ego and an extended view of developmental stages.

Erik Erikson believed that the ego Freud described was far more than just a mediator between the superego and the id. He saw the ego as a positive driving force in human development and personality. As such, he believed the ego's main job was to establish and maintain a sense of identity. A person with a strong sense of identity is one who knows where he is in life, has accepted this positions and has workable goals for change and growth. He has a sense of uniqueness while also having a sense of belonging and wholeness.

Those who have weaker egos, encounter trying times, or who have poorly developed egos get trapped in what is termed an identity crisis. According to Erikson, an identity crisis is a time in a person's life when they lack direction, feel unproductive, and do not feel a strong sense of identity. He believed that we all have identity crises at one time or another in our lives and that these crises do not necessarily represent a negative but can be a driving force toward positive resolution.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Like Freud and many others, Erik Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order. Instead of focusing on sexual development, however, he was interested in how children socialize and how this affects their sense of self. He saw personality as developing throughout the lifetime and looked at identity crises at the focal point for each stage of human development. Erikson's *Theory of Psychosocial Development* has eight distinct stages, each with two possible outcomes. According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self. These stages, however, can be resolved successfully at a later time. (See chart)

Stage	Basic Conflict	Important Events	Outcome
Infancy (birth to 18 months)	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care, and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.
Early Childhood (2 to 3 years)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Toilet Training	Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feelings of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.
Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this stage leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.
School Age (6 to 11 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority.
Adolescence (12 to 18 years)	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships	Teens needs to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.
Young Adulthood (19 to 40 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.
Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.
Maturity (65 to death)	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Reflection on Life	Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfilment. Success at this stage leads to feelings of wisdom, while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.